

DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

THE



TIMES

SATURDAY

March 1 2025 | thetimes.com | No 74657

£4 £2.30 to subscribers

(Based on a 7 Day Print and Digital Subscription)



President Zelensky's meeting with President Trump descended into a shouting match after the Ukrainian leader questioned America's stance on Russia and did not appear sufficiently thankful for US military aid

Meltdown in Oval Office

● Trump tells Zelensky he is risking World War Three ● Make a deal or we're out — and say thank you, demand Americans

David Charter, Alistair Dawber,
Charlotte McDonald-Gibson,
Catherine Philp, Oliver Wright

President Zelensky was asked to leave Washington last night after a disastrous public falling out with President Trump and his vice-president, JD Vance, that left the US-led push for peace in Ukraine in grave doubt.

An Oval Office meeting descended into bitter recriminations, with Trump accusing Zelensky of "gambling with World War Three" and calling off a ceremony to sign an economic partnership deal to bind the two countries in perpetuity.

Zelensky's emotional responses to an antagonistic Vance riled the US president, who repeatedly rebuked the Ukrainian leader, telling him in a raised voice that "you gotta be more thankful" and concluding: "The problem is I've empowered you to be a tough guy and

I don't think you'd be a tough guy without the United States. And your people are very brave. But you're either going to make a deal or we're out."

All the hard diplomatic groundwork laid by Sir Keir Starmer on Thursday and President Macron of France on Monday came undone.

The bust-up left in limbo the proposed reconstruction investment fund, renegotiated by the Ukrainians on more favourable terms. Although it contained no overt security guarantees, Trump insisted that America's security support was implicit in the investment its companies would make to exploit Ukraine's mineral reserves.

Zelensky left empty-handed after Trump called off a planned joint news conference. The US president posted a statement online that left only the slightest glimmer of hope that he would return to peace talks if the Ukrainian

president was involved. "It's amazing what comes out through emotion, and I have determined that President Zelensky is not ready for Peace if America is involved," Trump posted on his Truth Social site.

"He feels our involvement gives him a big advantage in negotiations. I don't want advantage, I want PEACE. He disrespected the United States of America in its cherished Oval Office. He can come back when he is ready for Peace."

The row broke out in the Oval Office when Trump positioned himself as a broker standing midway between Russia and Ukraine, instead of coming out firmly in the Ukraine camp, as the Europeans have. Zelensky apparently failed to appreciate that Trump believes this is the best position to bring both sides to the table and coax compromises from them.

Trump had sent positive signals to

Zelensky earlier in the meeting by refusing to repeat his calls for the Ukrainian leader to face an election.

The argument escalated with the intervention of Vance, a consistent critic of US funding and military support for Ukraine, who demanded more gratitude from Zelensky for US diplomatic efforts to end the war. "Do you think that it's respectful to come to the Oval Office of the United States of America and attack the administration that is trying to prevent the destruction of your country?" said Vance.

This was the signal for Zelensky to bite his lip but his emotions appeared to get the better of him and he came back at Vance for never visiting Ukraine.

Trump snapped after Zelensky told Vance "you have a nice ocean and don't feel now. But you will feel it in the future." Trump hit back: "Don't tell us what we're going to feel, because you're in no position to dictate that ... You

don't have the cards right now, you're gambling with the lives of millions of people. You're gambling with World War Three, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to this country."

Eventually Trump brought the bickering to a conclusion. "All right, I think we've seen enough. What do you think? This is going to be great television," he said.

Elon Musk, a close Trump ally who is directing a government efficiency drive, posted: "Zelensky destroyed himself in the eyes of the American people."

There was a mix of despair, outrage

Continued on page 4

